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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250-1340 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2623

August 13, 1993

NEW LABELS FOR HANDLING MEAT AND POULTRY -- By October 15th, all meat and poultry products that are not-ready-to-eat will have a label outlining care and handling instructions. Under a new USDA rule, manufacturers and retailers must label meat and poultry with information on safe storage, avoiding cross-contamination, cooking instructions and how to store leftovers. Agriculture Secretary **Mike Espy** announced the new labels at press conference with Darin and Vicki Detwiler, whose young son was killed early this year by E-Coli bacteria. E-Coli is associated with undercooked hamburgers. Espy said the labels are another step to improve meat and poultry safety efforts at USDA. **Contact: Steve Kinsella or Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623**

BOOSTING AG -- All printing at USDA must now use vegetable-based ink. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy is expanding the use of vegetable-based ink to all contracts. Printing totals some \$26 million dollars annually. Previously only in-house printing was done with ink derived from agricultural products. Soybean oil has emerged as a resource for making printing inks. Linseed oil, a vegetable oil that is derived from flax, has been used for decades in making ink. Espy says that petroleum-based inks can be used for USDA printing only when vegetable-based inks cannot be supplied to meet delivery dates. **Contact: Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623.**

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT -- A recent study by USDA shows that infrastructure, the fixed physical installations and facilities undergirding economic activities, is rarely sufficient by itself to promote rural economic development. Other factors such as an educated and healthy work force, good social institutions, adequate financial capital are equally important. The study shows that infrastructure investments will be most successful in promoting rural development when made part of an area's overall development strategy. The ability to connect with large urban areas of economic activity, adequate transportation to carry people and freight, and telecommunications to carry information, are critical if rural areas are to compete. **Contact: Thomas Rowley (202) 219-0546.**

HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS -- The United States exports \$1.4 billion in horticultural products to the European Community, making the U.S. the EC's third largest supplier of horticultural products. U.S. horticultural exports worldwide in May totaled \$678 million, 10 percent above year ago figures. The largest increases were in vegetables and tree nuts. Venezuela has stopped issuing permits for a wide range of imported commodities, including horticultural products. Failure to resume issuing import permits could reduce shipments of U.S. tree fruit and table grapes which are just now coming into season. Last year Venezuela imported \$17 million in U.S. horticultural products. **Contact: Geraldine Schumacher (202) 720-7115.**

THE THREE R'S -- For parents and students who want to "think green" when packing lunches, USDA has a '90's version of the three R's: reuse, recycle and reduce. Alternatives to the brown bag are reusable insulated totes or lunch boxes. Plastic storage containers can be reused for cold foods. Cloth napkins can replace paper napkins. Small plastic containers can be reused for lunch-sized portions of snack desserts such as jello or yogurt. Fruit juice is now available in recyclable aluminum cans. And families interested in reducing should remember to cut back on fat, sodium and cholesterol by switching to low-fat meats, poultry and cheeses, salt free pretzels and crackers, and fruit. **Contact: Susan Conley (202) 690-0351.**

RETURNING FARMS TO FARMERS -- Russia and the Baltic States are making progress in the privatization of agriculture. By the end of last year, 184,000 private farms existed in Russia, comprising six percent of arable land and contributing five percent of the year's total agricultural output. However, most of the farms are registered as cooperatives or joint-stock companies. Only four percent of the former collective of state farms have elected to reorganize into private farms. **Contact: William Liefert (202) 219-0620.**

REDUCING GRAIN DAMAGE -- USDA's research grain elevator in Manhattan, KS is developing and testing more gentle methods to move and handle grain. Breakage during high-volume handling is a major quality concern for all grains, especially corn. The pilot program is also studying new drying procedures, grain temperature and moisture content. Knowing when grain temperature and moisture will become a problem will help handlers to know when to aerate or fumigate. A computer program is being written based on research results that will help handlers predict storage problems. **Contact: Leon Hendricks (913) 776-2702.**

NUTRITION AND BREAST CANCER -- A study by USDA's Human Nutrition Research Center, in Beltsville, MD, has linked two suspected risk factors in breast cancer, moderate alcohol consumption and exposure to estrogen hormones. The study, which used the equivalent of two mixed drinks a day, increased estrogen levels up to 32 percent in healthy women volunteers. Elevated estrogen levels have long been implicated in breast cancer. The greatest increase was during the week of ovulation. **Contact: Joseph Ludd (301) 504-9014.**

NEW NEIGHBORS MOVING IN -- City sprawl has been consuming farm land. Not much new there. But putting it another way for emphasis, farming is not just a rural activity anymore. Many farms are now located near urban areas. Much of the nation's fruit and vegetable production takes place in the city's shadow, especially in California. By the early 1980's nearly 30 percent of farms were in metropolitan areas, and an additional 32 percent of farms were in counties adjacent to metropolitan areas. The trend has been accelerating during the past decade. **Contact: David Harrington (202) 219-0520.**

SWITCHING SATELLITES -- USDA-TV News weekly feeds are on a new satellite, Galaxy 4, which has replaced Galaxy 6. Nothing has changed except the name. Galaxy 4 is in the same place in the sky as the old Galaxy 6, at 99 degrees West Longitude. The new transponder is in the same frequency and channel (23) as the old one. USDA-TV news feed schedule has not changed. (see page three)

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1888 -- Patrick O'Leary visits the Boy Scout Jamboree '93 in Virginia, where the USDA and other groups are teaching scouts about conservation. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1370 -- Do you want organic foods?; the backyard farmer; tobacco awareness; scouts learn conservation; new food safety information on meat and poultry products. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1880 -- USDA News Highlights; new crop report; changes in haying and grazing rules; changes in farmer owned reserve; rangeland reform proposal. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1633 -- Salmonella broth; excluding salmonella; clearing the air; rust resistant gene markers; Puerto Rican research. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Wednesday, August 18 - fruit outlook; Thursday, August 19 - mushroom production, agricultural outlook; Friday, August 20 - cattle on feed, the feed outlook, livestock & poultry update; Monday, August 23 - catfish processing, U.S. trade update; Tuesday, August 24 - crop & weather update, world poultry situation; Wednesday, August 25 - cotton & wool outlook; Thursday, August 26 - dairy outlook, world tobacco situation. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Patrick O'Leary reports on the new pesticide record keeping law.

ACTUALITIES -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy signs drought declarations for southeastern states, announces new labels for meat & poultry, and holds news conference on USDA's August crop report; USDA Outlook Chairman James Donald on the new crop report; USDA meteorologist Mark Brusberg with a weather update.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on the U.S. rice outlook; Patrick O'Leary reports on recycling farm waste as fertilizer; Lynn Wyvill reports on a fungi collection that can be used as a forest management tool.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

REALLY BIG SHOW...just ended in Denver, says **Evan Slack** (Evan Slack Network, Denver, CO). The National Cattlemen's Association mid year convention gathered ranchers for four days of discussions on marketing, grazing fees and environmental issues. Evan says there's good grass in his area - the best roughage feed conditions in many years, and cattle prices are comparatively good. Dry land wheat looks like 60 to 70 bushel acres, despite some hail damage. Should make for some smiling faces during the busy county fair season now underway.

BEST PLACE TO FARM...in the U.S. right now is the 99-county area served by **Bob Givens** (KGNC Radio, Amarillo, Texas). Bob says cattlemen are moving record amounts of fed cattle - the one bright spot in agriculture. Despite near-drought conditions two weeks ago, crops are now looking great - wheat, milo and corn. Bob is doing early work on next June's NAFB meeting in Amarillo. South Central and Western regions are combining their regionals.

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HIGHER GRAZING FEES...proposed for public lands are getting mixed reviews in the Northwest, says **Gary Stewart** (Northwest Ag News Network, Newberg, Oregon). Gary says fee increases are lower than many had feared, but still are causing concern among ranchers. Gary says soft white wheat yields are down 30% due to fungus problems in some areas, but growers won't get a price break because of a bountiful harvest in Eastern Oregon and Washington state. All else is ok in the Willamette Valley - end of the Oregon Trail, which is 150 years old this year.

WHEAT HARVEST...is just about complete in Southwest Ohio; home of **Chip Nelson** (WKFI Radio, Wilmington, Ohio). Chip says many farmers are contemplating double-crop soybeans. Fair season is in full swing. Look for Chip and company at 24 county fair sales and the Ohio State Junior Fair Sale of Champions.

Pat O'Leary
Acting Chief, Radio & TV Division